

Daniella wrote, "Dear Navy soldiers, I wanted to tell you thanks for being our hero, representing our country. Thanks for everything you have done. It is amazing. Thanks for fighting for peace in the United States. Thank you so much for everything, and thanks for being our hero."

Mr. Speaker, when I visited this school yesterday, I learned that our young children, who have the same opinions that many of their parents do and many Members of Congress do, have a vitally important opportunity, despite those opinions, to show what counts, and that is support for our troops. These young students at the Finley Middle School had the opportunity not only to show that support but also to give expression to their feelings, to ask some questions; and, ultimately, I hope that that gave them a sense that they can engage in the great issues of our time, that they can venture an opinion, that that opinion counts, and that they can give some solace and some comfort to people who are fighting for their future in far away and dangerous places.

I want to thank the teachers, the administrators, and the students of that school; and I want to thank the people that they sent e-mails to just yesterday.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GUTKNECHT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE VOTE FOR A TAX CUT DURING A TIME OF DEFICIT AND WAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I traveled to the district after our vote on the budget, and there were sincere questions that came from many of the people in the district why we would do what we had done. I felt it was necessary to address this body again about the comments that we heard and the responses to that.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would remind this body that when we discuss such things as a budget, we should discuss, first of all, principles, that is, values. We should remember, Mr. Speaker, that this Nation was founded on the principle of freedom; but without economic freedom, no other freedoms really make a difference. It is economic freedoms that allow us access to the other freedoms granted by our Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind the Members that property rights, private

property rights, are one of the most significant aspects of our Constitution. They are one of the significant components of our economic freedoms.

So as we discuss our budget, we should remember that economic freedoms, that our constitutionally given private property rights, are a very important concept. They are the basis of the hopes and dreams, of the opportunities that this country makes.

A generation can dream for itself and then dream for its children and dream for its grandchildren. I know that is one of the greatest things that people knock on the door to get into America to achieve, to reach out for those economic freedoms, and the other freedoms of their daily lives. Mr. Speaker, as we reach those dreams, we should always be mindful that the dreams should be made ever-increasingly accessible to those who have not had them.

Mr. Speaker, I think, as we discuss the budget, we should recognize other basic principles, that is, basic, recognizable truths.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would say that America is overtaxed. It is not that America is undertaxed; it is that Washington overspends that causes the difficult situation facing us today.

My daughter graduated from college several years ago. She received her first paycheck. She called in indignation. I was serving as a State representative. She thought we could cure such things. She said, I am paying more in taxes than for rent, entertainment, and food combined. She said, what can you do about that? I said, well, I registered Republican. I do not know what you will do.

I would say one of the greatest principles we have here today is winning the war on terror. As we discuss the budget, we would want to understand that.

Another recognizable truth, Mr. Speaker, is that when the government spends an accumulated 20 to 25 percent of the gross domestic product, that an economy begins to stall. It becomes stagnant. We are seeing that model lived out in the socialist economies of Europe. We are very near the 22 percent limit that most economists suggest is an upward limit for vibrant growth, I would say.

I think another recognizable truth is that many of our corporations, because of our tax policies, are no longer competitive. They begin, before they even invest their first dollar, with a 10 percent or 12 percent disadvantage in the world markets.

So, Mr. Speaker, I voted for that budget because we began to cut spending and exercise fiscal restraint, and we did it while holding some of the basic programs harmless.

Mr. Speaker, there is a great curiosity why we would, in times of deficit, vote for a tax cut. I would just remind the Members that tax cuts are like investments. If we as individuals want more income in the future, we would

invest a portion of our current income. We would forgo consumption in the current time to invest it into the future.

Mr. Speaker, tax cuts are the investments in the future for our government. We send the money back to a generation, that they would be able to spend it and use it in consumption, driving up demand, increasing jobs. It is not just enough to increase that demand in the short run, Mr. Speaker; we have to increase it in the long run. So the tax cuts that we offered were permanent, extending into the future.

A tax cut also needs scope. It needs largeness. That is where the dividend tax cut comes in, Mr. Speaker. It also helps as far as business investment. One of the most significant aspects of this tax cut is that it has a size and scope to make a difference.

Mr. Speaker, the tax cut will fuel the economy into the future. The growth of the economy will result in greater revenues for the current time; and by forgoing current consumption, investing in a tax cut, we grow the size of the economy so we will have more revenues in the future. With that, we will balance the budget.

UNREAL BUDGET PASSED IN HOUSE ENDANGERS OUR ARMED FORCES, AMERICA'S FAMILIES AT HOME, AND OUR ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, last week, as our Nation engaged in war in Iraq, this House voted to approve a budget resolution for fiscal year 2004 that seriously jeopardizes the health, well-being, and security of our families, our economy, and our communities. It is a budget that benefits the few, the wealthy, and those who are not in need at the cost of working families, the young, the vulnerable, the aged, and the sick. It is a budget that puts both our present and our future at risk.

I do not know what world those who supported the budget live in, but it certainly is not the real world. In the real world, our economy is in trouble. We face massive budget deficits, and our States are confronting the worst fiscal condition in over 50 years.

In the real world, our communities are laying off teachers, police, and firefighters. In the real world, our infrastructure needs repair and modernization. In the real world, our families need quality schools and child care. In the real world, our current and future veterans deserve health care and other support. In the real world, our Social Security and Medicare systems are in financial crisis.

It is past time for this Congress to debate how to meet our obligations; not a time for silence, cynicism, and accounting tricks.

Mr. Speaker, we simply cannot afford the tax cuts passed in the Republican

leadership's budget resolution. We are at war in Iraq; we are in fiscal crisis at home. We have critical needs for our hometown security.

Next week, this House will debate the President's \$75 billion supplemental request to support the immediate costs of the war and the immediate needs of homeland security. This House was also going to take up a tax bill to approve at least the \$726 billion in tax cuts desired by the President. That tax bill might now be temporarily postponed because yesterday the other body was shocked into a moment of clarity. If only this House might also be jolted into facing reality.

Mr. Speaker, I had, and I still have, great reservations about our policy in Iraq. I continue to believe that this Congress has abdicated its responsibilities by not having a real debate about the war for more than 5 months. As parliaments and assemblies and congresses around the world debated this issue, the United States House of Representatives was silent. What a shameful performance.

We must not repeat that mistake by failing to ask the tough, necessary questions: How much will this war cost? What are the long-term consequences of occupying Iraq? How will that affect our ability to fund other priorities? What does it mean for our war on terrorism?

I believed then and I believe today that Congress must have the basic information to meet its foreign and domestic obligations. We were told during the budget debate that the administration did not know how much the war might cost or what might be in the supplemental. Two days after the House passed its budget, however, they obviously had a very clear idea and a very specific request for \$74.7 billion.

Mr. Speaker, this House passed a budget that makes a mockery of our duty to protect and promote the common good of the American people. We are not responding to the needs of the people when we pass a budget that closes down hospitals, lays off police and firefighters, shuts down after-school programs and child care centers, and cuts \$15 billion from veterans health and benefits.

We are now preparing to debate a supplemental that deliberately fails to provide Congress information on the full cost of the war, of rebuilding Iraq, and of protecting our communities. Now it is being described as the first installment; but we do not know how many other installments are coming, or when, or for what purpose. We do know that this first installment includes items that have nothing to do with the war, the reconstruction of Afghanistan, or homeland security. In fact, Colombia receives more aid for military security in this supplemental than my State of Massachusetts does for homeland security.

How sad. We must do better. We must make sure that America can meet its critical needs at home and abroad. We

need to support our troops, and we also need to support their families and our States and our communities right here at home.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I urge my colleagues to get real.

ALERTING MEMBERS TO NEW REPRESSION IN CUBA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to express my concern regarding a disturbing chain of events that have unfolded in Cuba over the last week and a half.

With the United States and the world preoccupied with the situation in Iraq, Castro is using this opportunity to take steps to dismantle the pro-democracy movement on the island. Hoping his actions would be overshadowed by world events, the regime has arrested and detained over 70 nonviolent human rights activists, pro-democracy leaders and independent journalists. These are the harshest acts of oppression taken by the Castro regime to silence opposition in recent years. Many worry these are only the first steps in an all-out campaign to silence all opposition on the island.

Last Monday, Castro issued an official communique that accused dissidents on the island of Cuba of conspiring with U.S. Interests Section Chief James Cason and other American diplomats to undermine the island's leadership.

On Tuesday, Castro agents began the first wave of a series of arrests on the island, rounding up dissidents, independent journalists, owners of independent libraries, leaders of opposition political parties, and pro-democracy advocates who have worked to gather signatures for the Varela Project.

Detainees have been charged with counts of counterrevolutionary activities, subversion, and conspiracy with U.S. diplomats. Many fear that Castro will use this as an opportunity to prosecute the prisoners under a much-criticized 1999 Cuban law that makes it a crime to publish subversive materials provided by the U.S. Government, and that carries with it a sentence of up to 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, leading up to last week's events, Castro was becoming increasingly agitated by Cason and other American diplomats on the island who have met in public with opposition leaders in an effort to encourage democracy in Cuba. Cason and his associates have logged countless miles of travel and have crisscrossed Cuba to distribute shortwave radios and a wide array of books and pamphlets aimed at promoting American culture, democracy, and human rights.

In an effort to silence these efforts, the Cuban Government announced on Tuesday that it was restricting the travel of Cason and other Americans at

the U.S. Interests Section, and quarantining our diplomatic officials in the province of Havana.

I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to note that one of the independent journalists currently in custody is Omar Rodriguez Saludes, whose work I have mentioned during previous speeches on the House floor, and who was featured in a story last June by The New York Times.

At the time, Omar shared his struggles and those of other independent journalists currently working in Cuba. He told of how he traveled around Havana on a battered child-sized bicycle and wrote his articles in longhand, or on a 20-year-old typewriter that a group of reporters share; and how he gathered every 2 weeks with other journalists in a cramped apartment in Havana to wait his turn to place a phone call and dictate his stories to audiences in the United States.

Castro believed the U.S. and other nations would be too engaged in world matters to notice the atrocities that he and his regime were committing against Omar Rodriguez and other voices for change in Cuba. I urge my colleagues to join with me and speak on the House floor and in other public forums to shed light on the situation in Cuba and show Castro that the world is indeed watching.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MCCOTTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCCOTTER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

A RUSH TO EXEMPT DEFENSE DEPARTMENT FROM MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, in the wake of our march to war with Iraq, too little attention has been placed on the rush to exempt the Department of Defense from most of America's major environmental laws.

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This is more than just another misguided assault on the environment by the Bush administration. It is a significant missed opportunity for the military.

Our defense-related activities are the source of the Nation's largest pollution and Superfund sites. From the radioactive legacy at Hanford, Washington, to the toxic residue of our chemical testing and manufacturing around American University here in Washington, D.C., every State, district and territory struggles with this problem.

More exemptions are not going to help. A lack of controls created this toxic legacy across America in the first